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Loncteaux

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(54) **METHOD OF COMMUNICATING COMPUTER OPERATION DURING A WAIT PERIOD**

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(52) **U.S. Cl.** **705/14**; 725/32; 725/36
(58) **Field of Search** 705/1, 14; 725/32, 725/36

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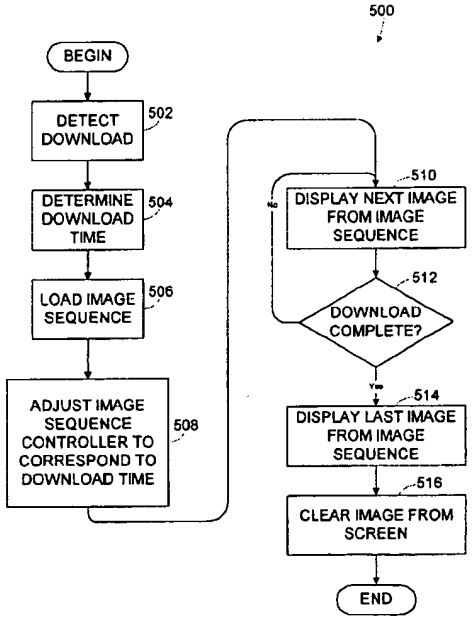
(57) **ABSTRACT**

In a method of displaying advertising and communicating computer operation during a wait period, a plurality of images is displayed during the wait period in a predetermined sequence as part of an animation that indicates that the wait period is proceeding. Advertising information is integrated with the plurality of images.

9 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets



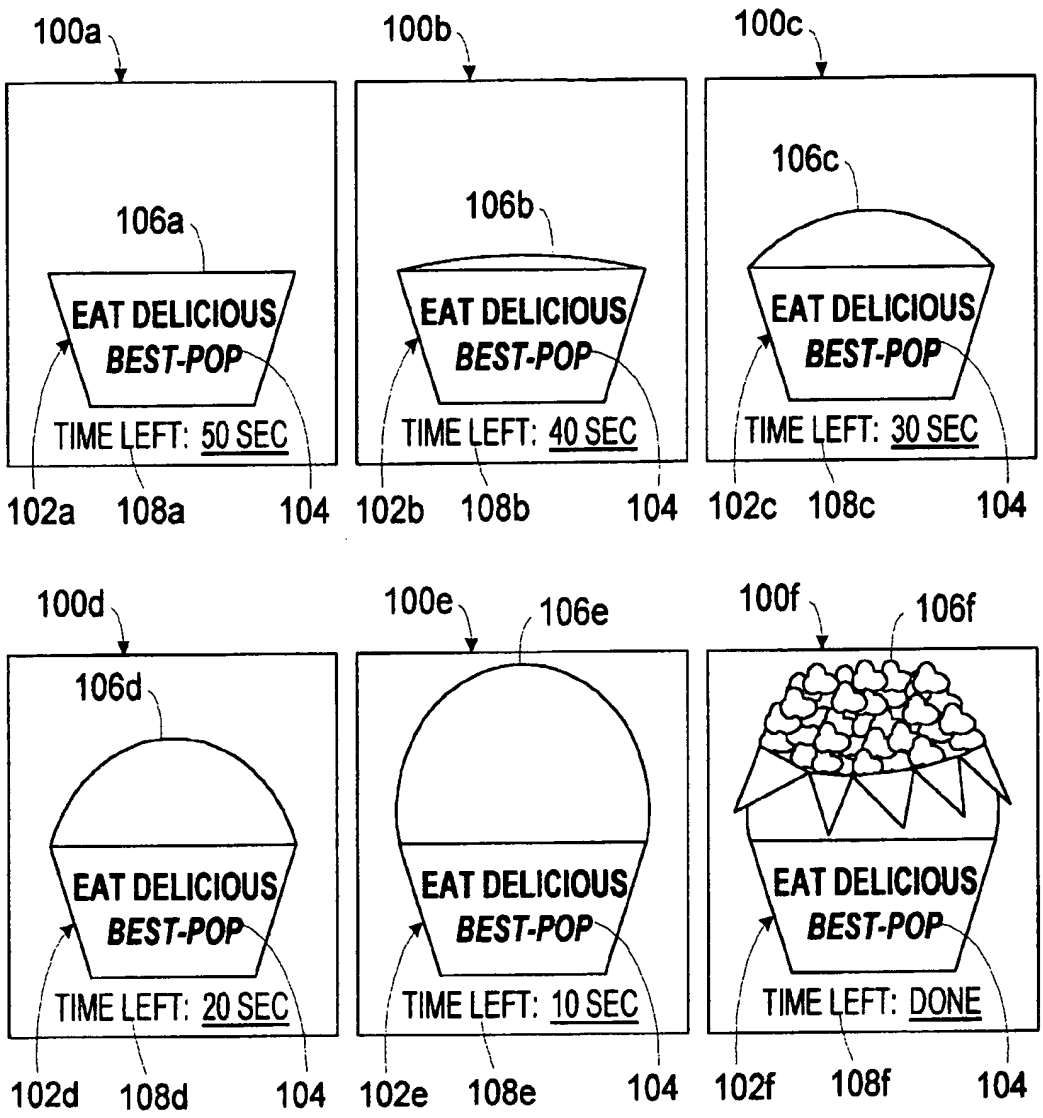

100a
106a
EAT DELICIOUS
BEST-POP
TIME LEFT: 50 SEC
102a
108a
104
100b
106b
EAT DELICIOUS
BEST-POP
TIME LEFT: 40 SEC
102b
108b
104
100c
106c
EAT DELICIOUS
BEST-POP
TIME LEFT: 30 SEC
102c
108c
104
100d
106d
EAT DELICIOUS
BEST-POP
TIME LEFT: 20 SEC
102d
108d
104
100e
106e
EAT DELICIOUS
BEST-POP
TIME LEFT: 10 SEC
102e
108e
104
100f
106f
EAT DELICIOUS
BEST-POP
TIME LEFT: DONE
102f
108f
104

FIG. 1

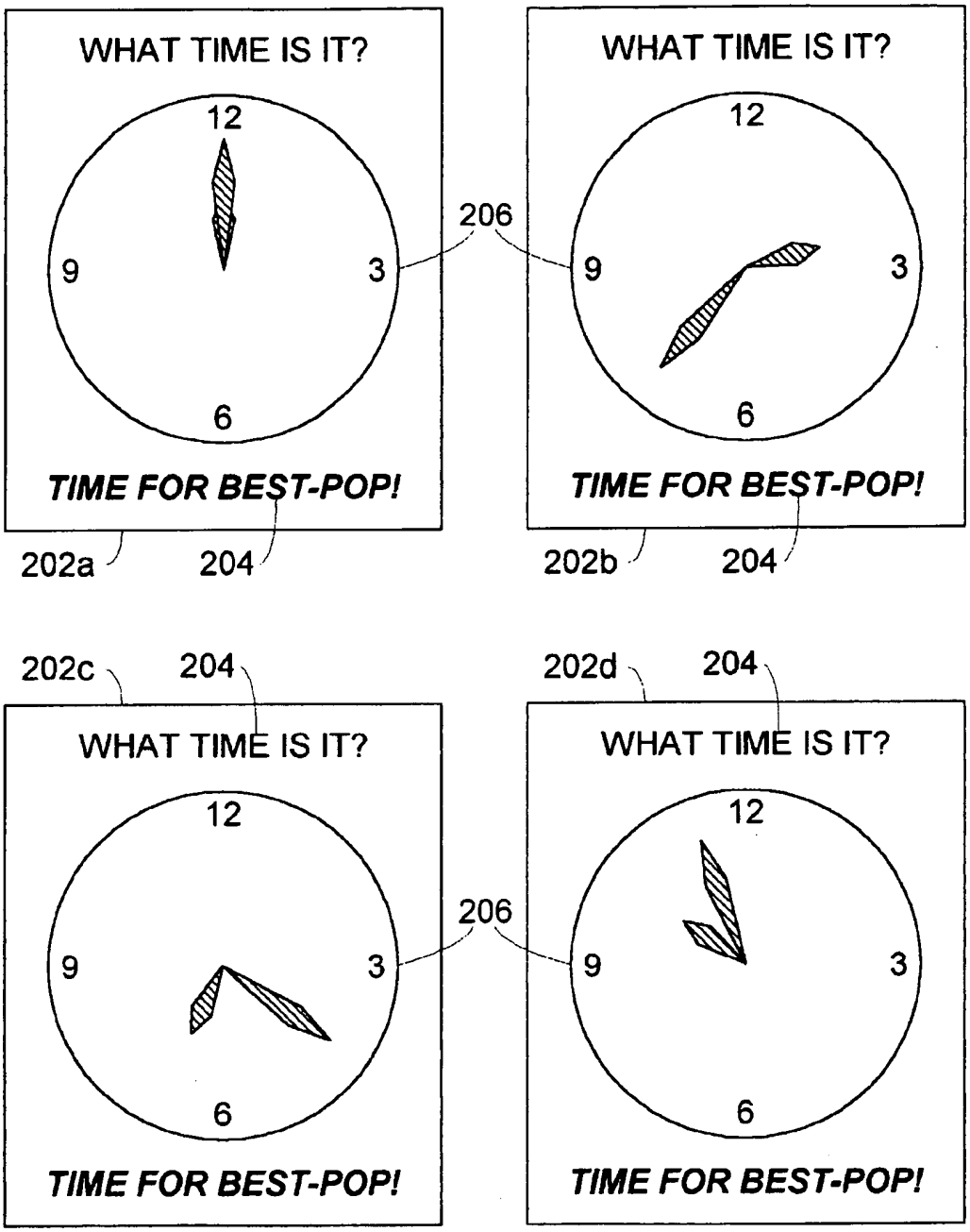

WHAT TIME IS IT?
12
9
3
6
TIME FOR BEST-POP!
206
202a
204
202b
202c
202d

FIG. 2

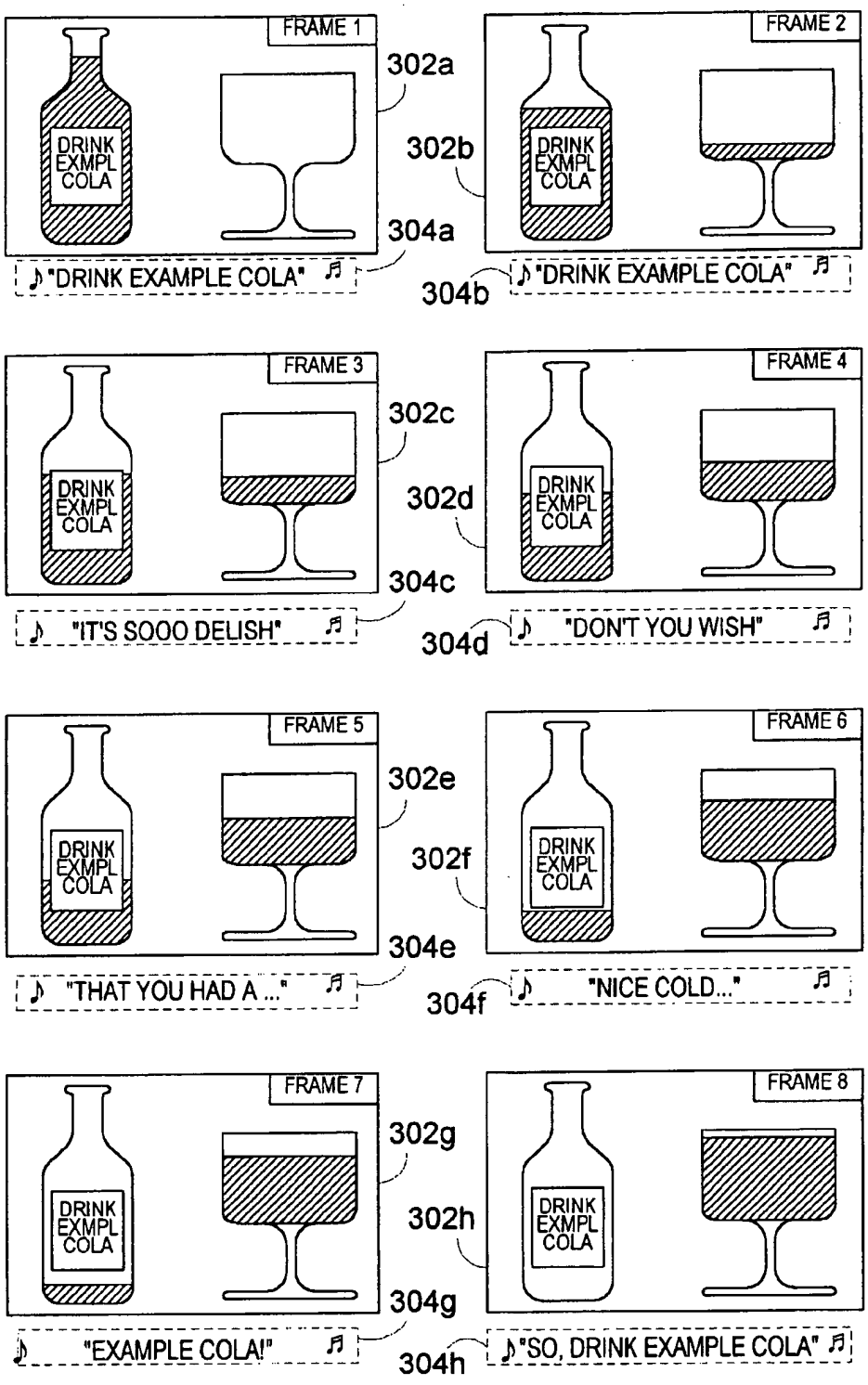

FRAME 1
DRINK EXMPL COLA
302a
FRAME 2
DRINK EXMPL COLA
302b
304a
♪"DRINK EXAMPLE COLA"
304b
♪"DRINK EXAMPLE COLA"
FRAME 3
DRINK EXMPL COLA
302c
FRAME 4
DRINK EXMPL COLA
302d
304c
♪ "IT'S SOOO DELISH"
304d
♪ "DON'T YOU WISH"
FRAME 5
DRINK EXMPL COLA
302e
FRAME 6
DRINK EXMPL COLA
302f
304e
♪ "THAT YOU HAD A ..."
304f
♪ "NICE COLD..."
FRAME 7
DRINK EXMPL COLA
302g
FRAME 8
DRINK EXMPL COLA
302h
304g
♪ "EXAMPLE COLA!"
304h
♪"SO, DRINK EXAMPLE COLA"

FIG. 3

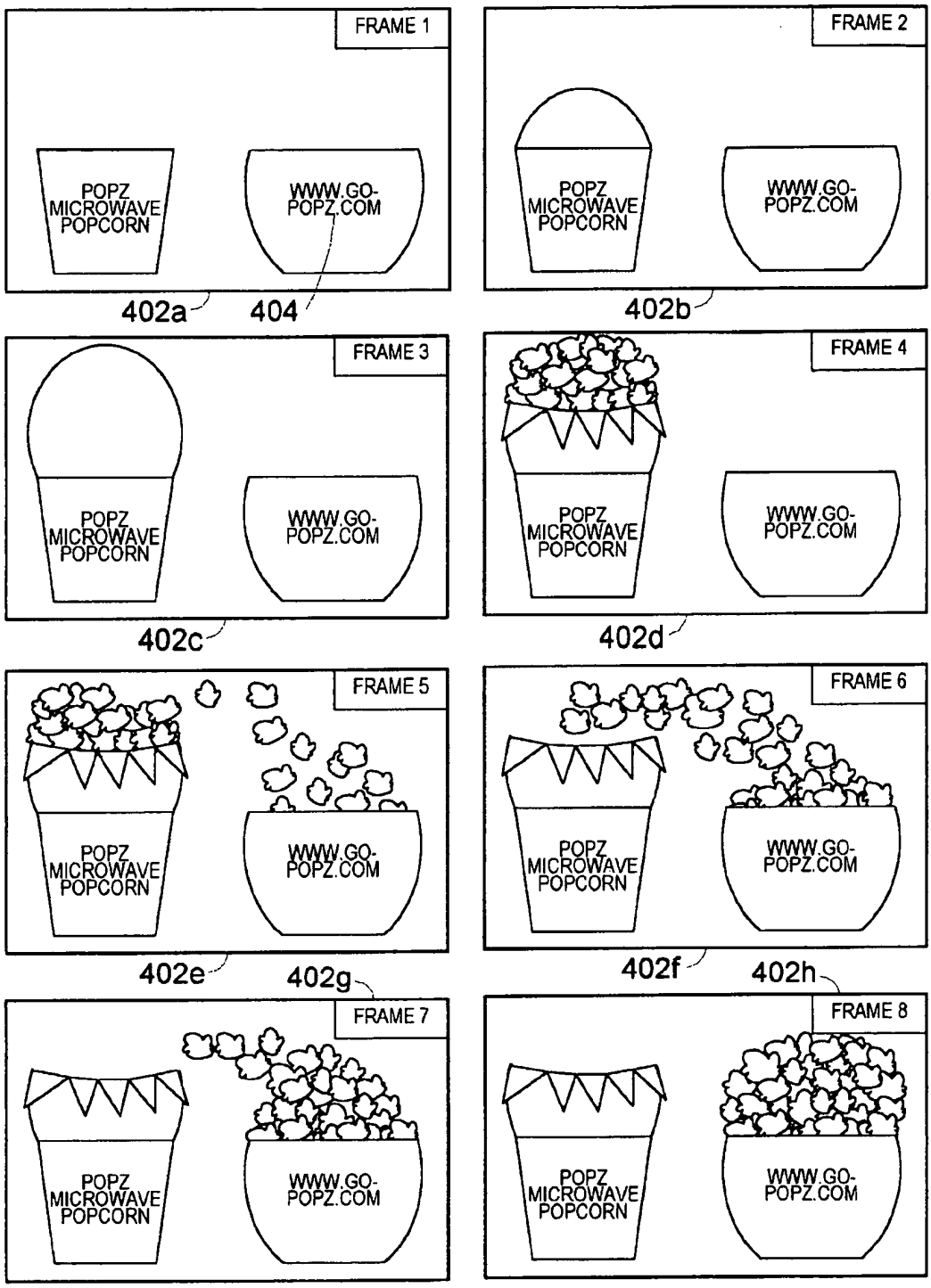

FRAME 1
POPZ MICROWAVE POPCORN
WWW.GO-POPZ.COM
402a
404
FRAME 2
POPZ MICROWAVE POPCORN
WWW.GO-POPZ.COM
402b
FRAME 3
POPZ MICROWAVE POPCORN
WWW.GO-POPZ.COM
402c
FRAME 4
POPZ MICROWAVE POPCORN
WWW.GO-POPZ.COM
402d
FRAME 5
POPZ MICROWAVE POPCORN
WWW.GO-POPZ.COM
402e
402g
FRAME 6
POPZ MICROWAVE POPCORN
WWW.GO-POPZ.COM
402f
402h
FRAME 7
POPZ MICROWAVE POPCORN
WWW.GO-POPZ.COM
FRAME 8
POPZ MICROWAVE POPCORN
WWW.GO-POPZ.COM

FIG. 4

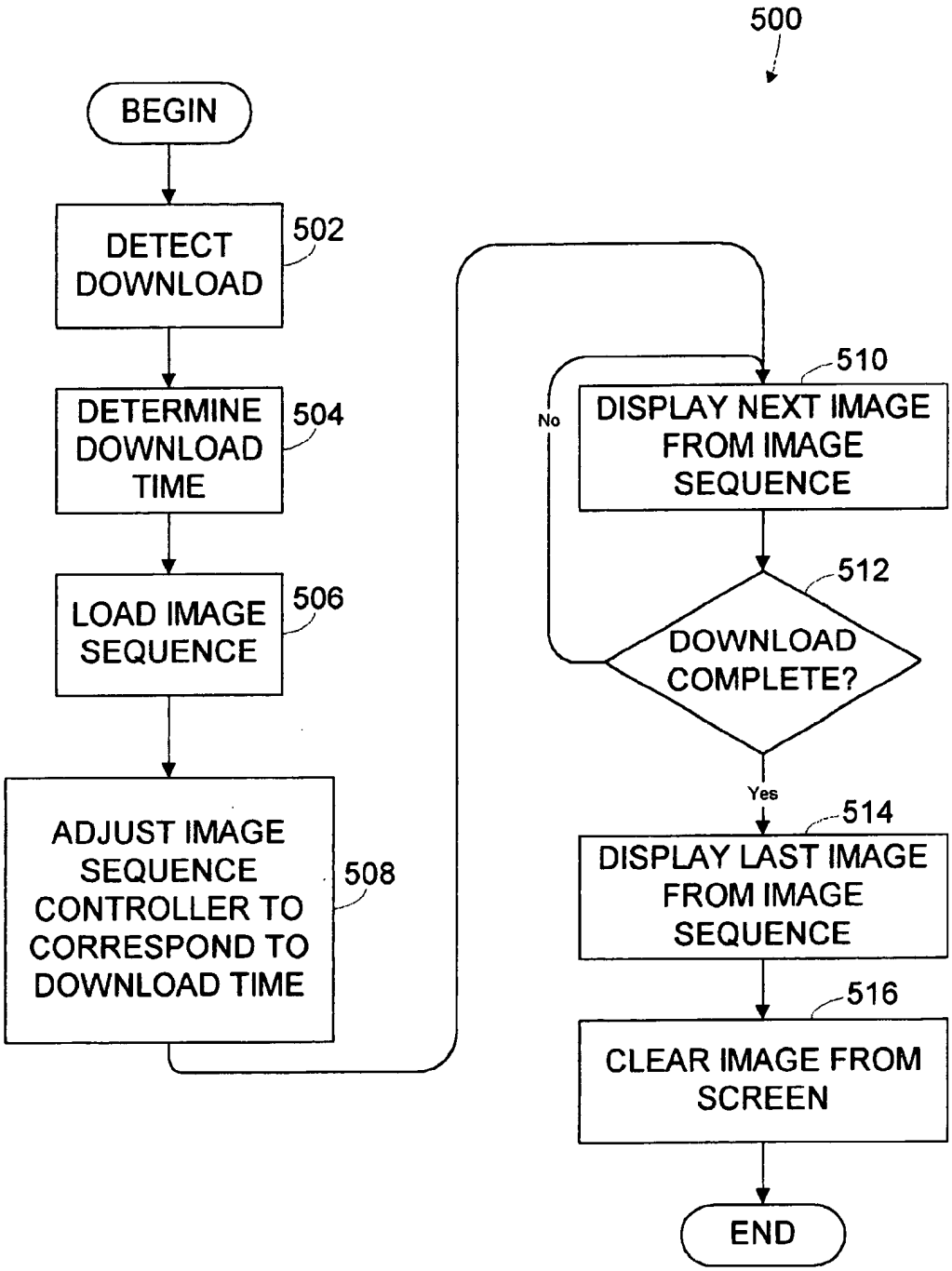

500
BEGIN
DETECT DOWNLOAD
502
DETERMINE DOWNLOAD TIME
504
LOAD IMAGE SEQUENCE
506
ADJUST IMAGE SEQUENCE CONTROLLER TO CORRESPOND TO DOWNLOAD TIME
508
510
DISPLAY NEXT IMAGE FROM IMAGE SEQUENCE
No
512
DOWNLOAD COMPLETE?
Yes
514
DISPLAY LAST IMAGE FROM IMAGE SEQUENCE
516
CLEAR IMAGE FROM SCREEN
END

FIG. 5

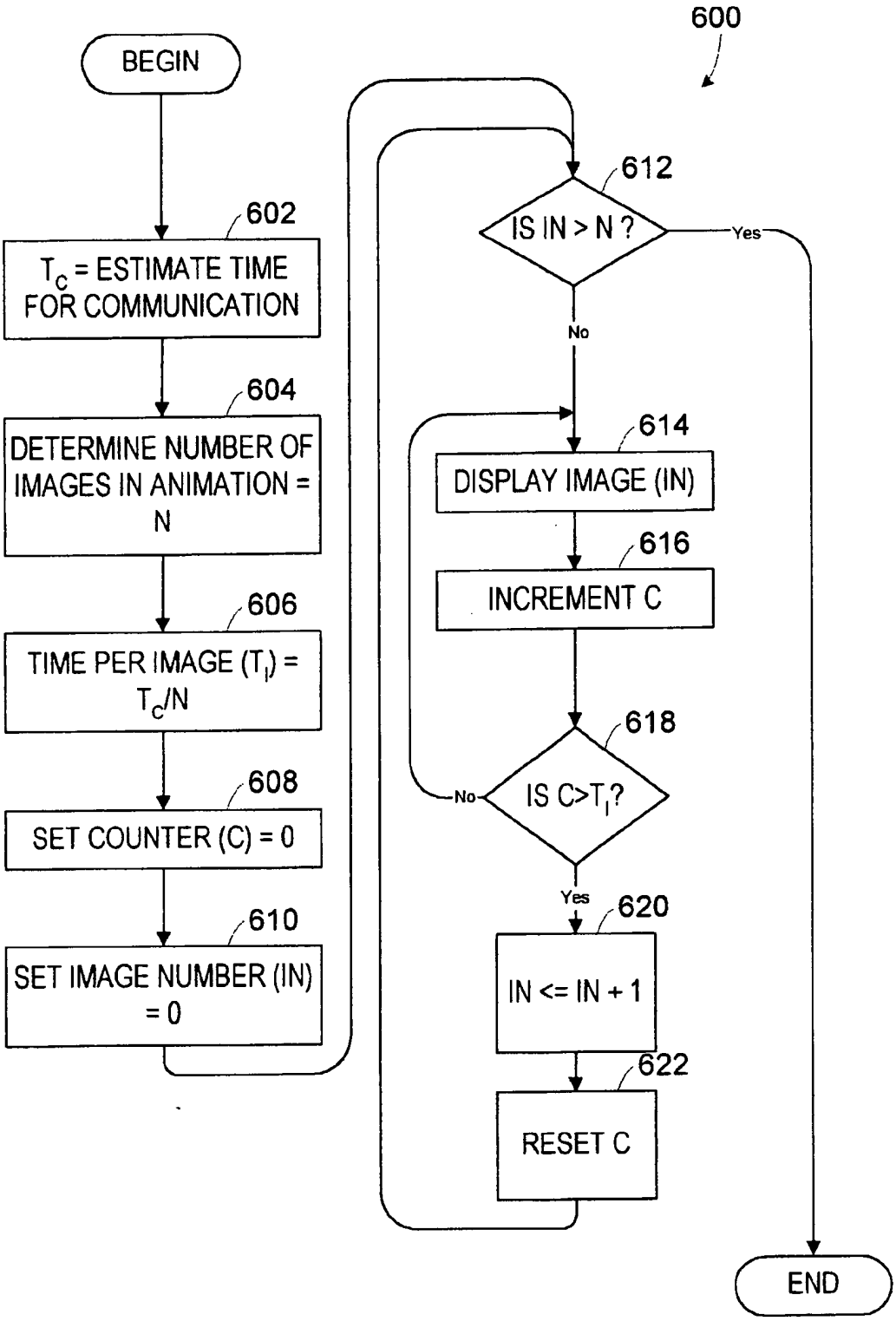

600
BEGIN
602
T_C = ESTIMATE TIME FOR COMMUNICATION
604
DETERMINE NUMBER OF IMAGES IN ANIMATION = N
606
TIME PER IMAGE (T_I) = T_C/N
608
SET COUNTER (C) = 0
610
SET IMAGE NUMBER (IN) = 0
612
IS IN > N ?
Yes
No
614
DISPLAY IMAGE (IN)
616
INCREMENT C
618
IS C>T_I?
No
Yes
620
IN <= IN + 1
622
RESET C
END

FIG. 6

METHOD OF COMMUNICATING COMPUTER OPERATION DURING A WAIT PERIOD

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to computer displays and, more specifically, to a method of displaying an indication of computer operation during computer download wait periods.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Computer wait periods a increasingly common. Examples of such periods include the amount of time expended during a data download (such as a site access on the global computer network), storage access time and time expended by a computer during complex operations. During such wait periods, the user is often concerned that the computer is malfunctioning and that it is not actually performing any operations.

To alleviate the user's concern, many computers display an indication that the computer is currently executing an operation that requires a wait period. Such an indication may be something as simple as an iconic representation of an hour glass displayed on the user's computer screen. More complicated systems give the user an idea of the amount of time remaining in the wait period. For example, many computers display a blue bar that changes in length in proportion to the amount of the period that has already passed during a data download.

Other than an indication of the time remaining in the wait period, no useful information is conveyed by such systems. Therefore, during the wait periods represented by such systems, the user often stares blankly at the screen while waiting for the wait period to end. Given that the user is also a consumer, current systems do not make use of the valuable attention of the user that could otherwise be directed to advertising information.

Therefore, there is a need for a system that makes greater use of the user's attention during computer wait periods.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The disadvantages of the prior art are overcome by the present invention which, in one aspect, is a method of displaying advertising and communicating computer operation during a wait period. During a wait period, a plurality of images is displayed in a predetermined sequence as part of an animation that indicates that the wait period is proceeding. Advertising information is integrated with the plurality of images.

In another aspect of the invention, a period of time, having a beginning and an end, that is required to complete a wait period is determined. A plurality of images is displayed in a predetermined sequence during the wait period. The plurality of images includes a first image and a last image. The images are displayed as part of an animation that symbolically represents the amount of time remaining in the period of time at any given time during the wait period. The first image is displayed contemporaneously with the beginning of the period of time and the last image is displayed contemporaneously with the end of the period of time.

In yet another aspect of the invention, during the wait period, a plurality of sounds is output in a predetermined sequence during the wait period. The plurality of sounds includes a first sound and a last sound, and they are output as part of an audible message that symbolically represents the amount of time remaining in the period of time at any given time during the wait period. The first sound is output contemporaneously with the beginning of the period of time and the last sound is output contemporaneously with the end of the period of time. The plurality of sounds include advertising information.

These and other aspects of the invention will become apparent from the following description of the preferred embodiments taken in conjunction with the following drawings.

As would be obvious to one skilled in the art, many variations and modifications of the invention may be effected without departing from the spirit and scope of the novel concepts of the disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a schematic diagram showing a first example of a sequence of images in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **2** is a schematic diagram showing a second example of a sequence of images.

FIG. **3** is a schematic diagram showing a third example of a sequence of images.

FIG. **4** is a schematic diagram showing a fourth example of a sequence of images.

FIG. **5** is a flow chart showing the general sequence of steps executed in one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **6** is a flow chart showing one method of synchronizing an animation with a wait period in accordance with the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

A preferred embodiment of the invention is now described in detail. Referring to the drawings, like numbers indicate like parts throughout the views. As used in the description herein and throughout the claims, the following terms take the meanings explicitly associated herein, unless the context clearly dictates otherwise: the meaning of "a," "an," and "the" includes plural reference, the meaning of "in" includes "in" and "on."

As shown in FIG. **1**, a first example of a sequence of images **100***a–f* that form an animation that is displayed during a computer wait time includes a plurality of picture elements **102***a–f* that change over time. The picture element **102***a* of the first image **100***a* could symbolically represent an item (e.g., a image of a product being advertised) as it appears at the beginning of a process, with each successive representation of picture elements **102***b–g* representing a successive stage in the process until the end of the process, which would be represented by picture element **102***f*. For example, if the images **100***a–f* form an animation that represent the popping of pop corn, then the picture element could include a changing portion **106***a–f* that, in successive frames, represents an expanding pop corn container. The first image **100***a* would be displayed at the beginning of the wait period and the last image **100***f* would be displayed at the end of the wait period. The images **100***a–f* could also include text **108***a–f* that would indicate the amount of time remaining in the wait period. The picture elements **102***a–f* would also include advertising information, such as a product-related slogan **104**, integrated therein.

As shown in FIG. **2**, in a second example of a sequence of images **202***a–d*, the picture element **206** could a simple image, such as that of a clock wherein movement of the

hands of the clock represent the passing of time. In this example, the advertising information **204** could be displayed in a part of the image **202***a–d* other than in the picture element **206**.

As shown in FIG. **3**, a plurality of sounds **304***a–h* could be output by the computer in combination with the images **302***a–h*. The sounds could be generated from a digitized copy of, for example, an advertising jingle. In this example, the amount of time passing and the amount of time remaining in the wait period could be indicated by the image **302***a–h*, the plurality of sounds **304***a–h*, or both.

As shown in FIG. **4**, the plurality of images **402***a–h* could be provided with information such as a global computer network address **404** to the advertiser's network site. Such an address **404** could be in the form of static text, or it could be in the form of a hypertext link.

As shown in FIG. **5**, the steps **500** executed by the computer to display the images during the wait period begin when a wait period, such as a data download, is detected **502**. The method of detection depends on the protocol for the type of wait period commencing (e.g., a global computer network download) and the method of detection is generally known in the art for each type of protocol. The computer determines **504** the amount of time that will be required to complete the wait period and then loads **506** a sequence of images stored in memory. Again, the method required for this determination depends on the protocol of the system causing the wait period and is generally known to the art for each protocol. In one embodiment, an image sequence controller, of the type that is typical for computer-generated video, is adjusted **508** so that the images of the animation are evenly displayed during the wait period. In another embodiment, images are sequenced at a fixed rate, with the final image remaining on the screen until the end of the wait period.

At this point, the computer displays **510** the first image in the image sequence and then performs a test **512** to determine if the wait period (e.g., download) is complete. If the answer to test **512** is "No," then execution returns to display **510** the next image from the image sequence. If the answer to test **512** is "Yes," then the computer displays **514** the last image from the sequence and then clears **516** the image from the screen, allowing normal use of the computer thereafter.

As shown in FIG. **6**, one embodiment of the steps performed by the image sequence controller **600** starts by setting a variable, T_c, equal to an estimate of the amount of time required for the wait period. Typically, this estimate is included in most computer communication protocols, or it may easily be determined therefrom, as is generally known in the art. The computer sets **604** a variable, N, equal to the number of images in the animation (which could be stored in a memory location with the image data for each animation) and determines **606** the amount of time that each image should be displayed, T_i, as being equal to T_c divided by N. The system then sets **608** a counter, C, equal to zero and sets **610** an image number variable, IN, equal to zero. The system performs a test **612** to determine if the image number IN is greater than the total number of images. If the answer to this test **612** is "Yes" then no images remain in the sequence to be displayed and execution exits this routine. On the other hand, if the answer to this test **612** is "No," then the system displays **614** the image having an image number corresponding to the current value of IN and the system increments **616** the counter C. Next, the system determines **618** if the value in the counter is greater that the time per image, T_i. If the answer to this test **618** is "No," then the current image should continue to be displayed and execution returns to the display current image operation **614**. If the answer to test **618** is "Yes," then the current image has been displayed long enough, the image number IN is incremented **620**, the counter is reset **622** and execution returns to test **612** to determine if the last image has been displayed.

Although the images disclosed above represent items, the images could also symbolically represent or otherwise relate to a product. For example, if one were advertising milk, the animation could include representations of a cow, or even a company logo. Furthermore, text or symbols could be used to represent the product being advertised. The invention could also be applied to the advertising of a service by showing a representation of actions relating to the service (e.g., a delivery service could show images of a delivery truck going from a starting point to an ending point).

The system could employ several different animations and could be caused to show a different animation during each successive wait period, so that the same animation is not shown twice in a row. This approach offers the advantage of reducing the likelihood that the user will become bored with the animations after several successive wait periods.

The figures referred to herein include examples of embodiments of the invention that contain depictions that may resemble trademarks or trade names. It is the intention of the inventor that such depictions represent only the idea of such an identifier being used in association with the embodiment, and that such depictions do not resemble any actual trademarks or trade names. Any resemblance of any of the depictions in the figures to any actual trademark or trade name is completely unintentional and merely coincidental. Therefore, none of the depictions in the figures should be interpreted as showing any affiliation with any actual source of goods or services.

The above described embodiments are given as illustrative examples only. It will be readily appreciated that many deviations may be made from the specific embodiments disclosed in this specification without departing from the invention. Accordingly, the scope of the invention is to be determined by the claims below rather than being limited to the specifically described embodiments above.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of displaying advertising and communicating computer operation during a wait period, comprising the step of during a wait period, having a beginning and an end, displaying in a predetermined sequence a plurality of images directed toward advertising information, having a first image and a last image, as part of an animation, so that display of the first image coincides with the beginning of the wait period and so that display of the last image coincides with the end of the wait period.

2. The method of claim **1**, wherein the animation relates to a product that is being advertised.

3. The method of claim **1**, wherein the animation relates to a product that is being advertised.

4. The method of claim **1**, further comprising the step of providing text that indicates the amount of time remaining in the period of time at any given time during the wait period.

5. A method of displaying advertising and communicating computer operation during a wait period, comprising the steps of

a. determining a period of time, having a beginning and an end, that is required to complete a wait period; and

b. during the wait period, displaying in a predetermined sequence a plurality of images directed toward advertising information, including a first image and a last image, as part of an animation, the first image being displayed contemporaneously with the beginning of the period of time an d the last image being displayed contemporaneously with the end of the period of time.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the animation relates to a product that is being advertised.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein the animation relates to a service that is being advertised.

8. The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of providing text that indicates the amount of time remaining in the period of time at any given time during the wait period.

9. A method of advertising and communicating computer operation during a wait period, comprising the steps of:

a. determining a period of time, having a beginning and an end, that is required to complete a wait period; and

b. during the wait period, outputting in a predetermined sequence a plurality of sounds, including a first sound and a last sound, as part of an audible message that includes advertising information therein, the first sound being output contemporaneously with the beginning of the period of time and the last sound being output contemporaneously with the end of the period of time.

* * * * *